

I. INTRODUCTION

This document has been prepared by the City of Santa Clara as the Lead Agency in conformance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines. The purpose of this Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) is to inform decision makers and the general public of the environmental effects of the proposed Kaiser Permanente Santa Clara Medical Center Helipad project, to identify ways in which any significant effects might be minimized, and to identify alternatives to the project that could avoid or reduce those significant impacts.

Background

An Environmental Impact Report (Kaiser Permanente Santa Clara Medical Center Replacement Project, SCH# 1993091094) that addressed adoption of the current zoning on the Lawrence Expressway hospital site was certified by the City Council in 1995. The 1995 Final Environmental Impact Report (1995 Final EIR) addressed the physical impacts of buildout of a hospital and medical office buildings to replace the Kaiser Permanente facilities on Kiely Boulevard in Santa Clara. The proposed emergency helipad represents an additional use at the site, not previously addressed in the 1995 Final EIR.

An Initial Study and Draft Negative Declaration were prepared in December 2004 on the proposed helipad project and circulated for a 30 day review period ending on January 20, 2005. The Initial Study primarily addressed the use and operation of the proposed helipad for the emergency evacuation of approximately three to four critically ill infants per year from the medical center facility to Stanford University Hospital. Comments on the Initial Study and Draft Negative Declaration were received from the California Department of Transportation Division of Aeronautics, the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, County of Santa Clara Department of Roads and Airports, Santa Clara Valley Water District, and several members of the public. The County of Santa Clara Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) also reviewed the project and Draft Negative Declaration and found the project consistent with ALUC policies. Several commentors requested that additional information on the conditions of helipad operation and alternatives be addressed prior to approval of the proposed project. In response to these comments, the project description was modified to account for the possibility of additional emergency evacuations.

Based upon the modification to the project description, a significant periodic noise impact could occur in the future. This significant environmental effect was not previously identified in the 1995 Final EIR or the December 2004 Initial Study and would not be mitigated by measures included in the project.

Under Section 15162 (a)(1) of the CEQA Guidelines, a subsequent EIR shall be prepared if substantial changes are proposed in a project evaluated in a previously certified EIR, and new significant environmental effects would result. If only minor additions or changes would be necessary to make the previous EIR adequate for the project as revised, the Lead Agency, per CEQA Guidelines Section 15163, may choose to prepare a Supplement to the EIR (a Supplemental EIR). A SEIR is given the same kind of notice and public review as a Draft EIR and may be circulated by itself, without recirculating the previous Draft or Final EIR. The decision-making body shall consider the previous EIR as revised by the Supplemental EIR in their decision whether or not to approve the project.

Focusing the Supplemental EIR

In accordance with Section 15063(c) of the CEQA Guidelines, an Initial Study has been prepared to focus the SEIR. This Initial Study (included as Appendix A) evaluated the impacts of the proposed construction and operation of a helipad for emergency evacuations compared to the impacts of the overall Kaiser Permanente Santa Clara Medical Center Project addressed in the 1995 Final EIR. Generally, when an Initial Study is used to focus an EIR, the EIR focuses on the effects determined to be significant.

Several new impacts or environmental effects would occur if the proposed helipad is constructed and used for emergency helicopter landings and take-offs. The SEIR will focus on those subject areas where new impacts would occur.

The SEIR will supplement the 1995 Final EIR in that it will provide for a review of the details of the proposed project and compare the project to currently allowed development on the Lawrence Expressway site and emergency helicopter evacuations at Kaiser Permanente's existing facility on Kiely Boulevard. The SEIR will evaluate new impacts (such as noise from helicopter overflights) that were not described in the 1995 Final SEIR but that could occur under the proposed project.

Contents of the SEIR

This document describes the physical environment in the vicinity of the project, as those conditions existed at the time the Notice of Preparation of the Draft SEIR was published on January 6, 2006 [per CEQA Guidelines Section 15125]. The consideration and discussion of environmental impacts that follow evaluate whether the environmental effects are significant; that is, do those effects exceed stated levels or "thresholds" of significance. Mitigation or avoidance measures, proposed to minimize the identified significant environmental effects, are also described in the discussion of environmental impacts and mitigation measures, per CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.

In addition to the evaluation of environmental impacts under individual subject areas in the SEIR, the SEIR will include three other important sections: *Consistency with Plans and Policies*, *Alternatives*, and *Cumulative Impacts*.

The discussion of the project's consistency with plans and policies addresses consistency with the City's General Plan, as well as regional plans, such as the San Francisco Bay Clean Air Plan and the Santa Clara County Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) Land Use Plan Around Airports.

The Alternatives section includes a description of possible alternatives to the project. The alternatives section includes a No Project Alternative and other possible alternatives that might reasonably be expected to reduce environmental effects associated with the project.

Under Cumulative Impacts, the EIR addresses the potentially significant cumulative impacts of the project when considered with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects in the area.

A. USES OF THE SEIR

It is proposed that this SEIR be relied upon in issuing appropriate project-specific discretionary approvals necessary to implement this project as proposed. These actions include the following approvals by the agencies indicated:

City of Santa Clara

Use Permit

State of California, Office of Statewide
Health Planning and Development (OSHDP)

Building Permit for Hospital Facilities

State of California, Department of Transportation,
Division of Aeronautics

New Heliport Permit

B. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The City of Santa Clara, as required under CEQA, encourages public participation in the environmental review process. Opportunities for comments by public agencies and the public include responding to the Notice of Preparation of the Draft SEIR, written comments on this Draft SEIR, and presentation of written or verbal comments at a future public hearing of the City of Santa Clara Planning Commission.

A Notice of Preparation for this Draft SEIR was circulated to public agencies in January 2006. Responses to the January 2006 Notice of Preparation are included in Appendix B of this document.

Under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the Lead Agency is required, after completion of a Draft EIR, to consult with and obtain comments from public agencies having jurisdiction by law with respect to the proposed project, and to provide the general public with an opportunity to comment on the Draft EIR. Written comments concerning the environmental review contained in this Draft SEIR may be submitted to the Lead Agency, the City of Santa Clara, to the attention of Jeff Schwilk, City of Santa Clara Planning Division, 1500 Warburton Avenue, Santa Clara, CA 95050 during the 45-day public review and comment period. Written and verbal comments may also be presented at scheduled public hearings on certification of the Final SEIR.

C. ORGANIZATION OF THE DRAFT SEIR

The Draft SEIR includes the following sections:

Summary

The Summary of the Draft SEIR, which precedes this introduction, includes a brief description of the proposed Kaiser Permanente Santa Clara Medical Center Helipad project and summarizes the project's impacts, mitigation and avoidance measures, and alternatives to the project. The summary also briefly describes any known areas of public controversy and the views of local groups.

Section I. Introduction

This section provides a general overview of the CEQA process, describes the public participation process and opportunities for input, describes the intended uses of the SEIR, and outlines the contents of the Draft SEIR.

Section II. Description of the Proposed Project

This section describes the physical and operational characteristics of the proposed project. Information on the location of the project and the project's conformance with applicable General Plans and regional plans are addressed in this section.

Section III. Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation

The Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation section includes descriptions of the physical setting of the project area, identifies environmental impacts resulting from the project, and identifies mitigation and avoidance measures for the environmental impacts examined in the SEIR. The primary environmental issue areas addressed in this Draft SEIR are land use and hazards (including land use compatibility and safety hazards), noise, and visual resources. In this section, the Draft SEIR identifies measures included in the project to reduce or avoid significant impacts and briefly evaluates the expected effectiveness/feasibility of these measures.

Section IV. Cumulative Impacts

This section includes a discussion of cumulative environmental impacts of the project along with other pending and future development in the area.

Section V. Growth Inducing Impacts

The discussion of growth inducing impacts addresses the ways in which a proposed project could foster economic or population growth or the construction of additional housing in the surrounding area.

Section VI. Alternatives to the Proposed Project

Alternatives that would avoid or lessen significant impacts are identified in this section. This section also includes discussions of alternative helipad locations that were considered by the applicant or the City of Santa Clara, but were determined infeasible, and/or did not meet the basic objectives of the project.

Section VII. Significant Unavoidable Impacts

The purpose of this section is to list significant unavoidable impacts that could result if the proposed project is implemented.

Section VIII. References

This section lists the references, persons, and organizations consulted during preparation of the Draft SEIR.

Section IX. Authors and Consultants

This section lists the lead agency staff and consultants who participated in preparation of the Draft SEIR.

D. REFERENCE AVAILABILITY

Copies of all documents referred to in this SEIR are available for review at the City of Santa Clara Planning Division, 1500 Warburton Avenue, Santa Clara, CA 95050 during normal business hours.